

# High Weald Anvil <sup>2011</sup>

A **free** guide to one of England's finest landscapes



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### Changing landscapes

The 'oil baron', forest guardian, flying shepherd – meet some of the people who live and work on the land. **Pages 2, 3, 4 & 5**



### Teatime in the country

100 Aker Cakes, Tigger's Treats and other delicious delights on the teashop trail.

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**Welcome to the 12th edition of the High Weald Anvil**  
an annual newspaper for residents of, and visitors to, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

**We** are experiencing significant, perhaps fundamental, changes in our lives resulting from the financial crisis, public sector cuts, global energy and food concerns, moves toward a low-carbon economy and changes to our climate.

Change can be unsettling but, as any historian knows, it is nothing new and the High Weald, a nationally important landscape, has to evolve if it is to thrive. It is our life support system – it has provided for basic human needs: food, shelter, fuel, water over centuries and has the potential to continue to do so.

Innovation has the power to benefit an entire community. Our feature *The Fattening Land* recounts the heady days in the late 1700s when a housewife found a way to fatten her farmyard chickens and get extra value for them. Her methods would be frowned upon today, no doubt, but her idea caught on helping to make Heathfield a veritable powerhouse of chicken production!

*Return of the Native* is a heartwarming story of the resilience of the natural world. Buzzards, hunted to near extinction by the Victorians and decimated by the widespread use of pesticides such as DDT, in the 1950s and 1960s, are a prime example. Thanks to more environmentally-friendly land management methods the Buzzard is a familiar sight once more, soaring majestically in the sky above the High Weald.

One thing that hasn't changed is our fondness for the delights of afternoon tea, with mouthwatering Kent or Sussex cream teas a particular favourite. It is heartening to note, therefore, that even in these recessionary times the great British tea room is not only surviving, but thriving.

As a farmer I am delighted that in this issue we focus on the people who work, or have worked, the countryside of the High Weald. Through their eyes we see how we may be able to find an environmentally responsible, yet economically sustainable way, to provide a living wage for those working the land.

*Lydia Tidy*

The High Weald Anvil is published annually by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (see back page).

**The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee:**

- furthers understanding of the High Weald
- advises on its management and
- enables action to conserve it.

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# The changing f



Looking down on Lamberhurst in the 1940s



...and in 2008

**As we say farewell to the first decade of a new millennium, what does the future hold for the High Weald? The character of the landscape is essentially the same as it was 600 years ago; it is considered to be one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. But will its special character be evident 600 years from now? Or will the pressures of a growing and globalised society prove too much?**

Residents and visitors marvel at the High Weald's rolling, wooded landscape, forged by our ancestors during a long history of collaboration with nature to provide basic human needs: food, shelter,

fuel, water, trade and community through farming, hunting, animal husbandry, timber production and not one, but two periods of large scale iron production. What will be the activities of the future? Will they protect our rich heritage of ancient woodland, heaths, wildflower meadows, hedges and archaeological features? Neglect is already a serious threat to these features.

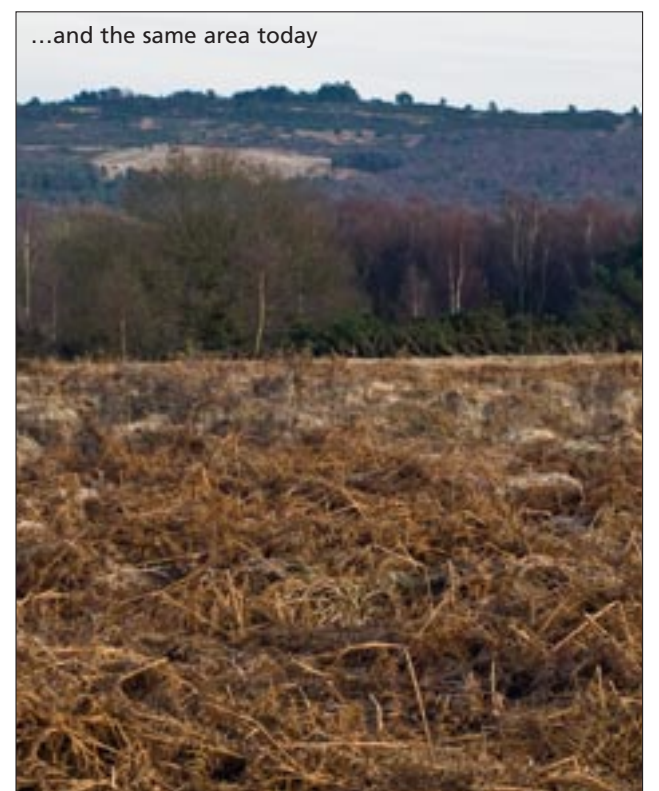
Farmers are under increasing pressure to produce more for less money. Can they continue to manage the land for food and make a living? A growing interest among consumers for quality food produced locally offers hope. Can we harness more of the area's woodlands to meet our energy

needs? The demand for logs has increased but still only 8.6 per cent of our woodlands are managed. As farms and woodlands are gradually sold off as small plots will the landscape evolve to primarily service our leisure needs or does it pave the way for new systems to achieve productive land management?

The crux of the matter is that if we want to make the most of the resources that the landscape provides there needs to be a viable market for whatever is being produced. To that end all of us play a part in the future of our rural landscape every time we make a choice about where to buy our logs or our meat for the Sunday roast.



Gill's Lap from Coleman's Hatch in the 1930s



...and the same area today

*Coleman's Hatch, Fishdown Forest*

# Face of the High Weald

## Forest guardian

**Hew Prendergast** has lived on Ashdown Forest for 21 years and was on the board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest for three years. During a career in plant science he worked for The Botanic Garden Kew at Wakehurst Place in West Sussex. When an opportunity arose to work full time for the conservators, he seized it, and was appointed director eight years ago.

Ashdown Forest covers 6,500 acres and is the largest free public access space in South East England. It receives national and international protection because of its

**“The greatest threat to Ashdown Forest is the cessation of sustainable human exploitation”**

wildlife value – two thirds of the forest is open heathland, a rare habitat of nature conservation concern.

“Our role as conservators covers all aspects of the care and administration of the Forest. Grazing livestock is as much a part of the Forest as the heather and wide open views. In the 1940s the Forest comprised 15 per cent woodland but by the 1990s woodland cover had reached 40 per cent.

“Today we have just one commoner grazing a significant number of animals on the Forest. Unless his son carries on, when he retires there will be none. The greatest threat to Ashdown Forest is the cessation of sustainable human exploitation of the land. That is what has created the Forest, without it the Forest will change beyond recognition.”



## Living off the land

As in the past, the people who live and work in the High Weald today are as much a part of its character as the landscape itself. Some of them have worked the land for decades, others are newcomers. **James Sharpe** meets some of them to discover what, if anything, has changed during their tenure and what they think the future may hold.

## Alpacas and wildflowers

**Vicki and Chris Agar** bought Spring Farm at Fletchling, near Uckfield, in 1998 as a 47-acre livery yard. Since then they have restored hedgerows, planted species-rich wildflower grassland and bought two neighbouring plots of land including 38 acres of former floodplain on the Ouse, which is being restored to traditional wet meadow. Their land holding now comprises 110 acres, mainly wildflower grassland with a high nature conservation value.

Vicky says: “I studied fisheries management at university but then worked for Barclays Bank in London for 15 years. In 1998 we had the opportunity to buy the farm and I now run Spring Farm Alpacas full-time, employing three part-time staff. My husband, Chris, also works on the farm and part-time in the City.

“We have 103 alpacas; we bred 37 in 2010 and sold 30 of those. We also sold 30 fleeces last year. Alpacas produce highly prized fleece with a quality to rival cashmere. Our next step is to develop the market for this premium fibre product.”



**“Alpacas produce highly prized fleece to rival cashmere”**

## Facts of the land

- 45.8% of farmers are part-time
- 15% of farm holdings are in an environmental stewardship scheme
- 43% of farms are less than 5ha, 25% are 5-20ha
- 24.6% of the High Weald is woodland
- If 50% of High Weald woodlands came under sustainable management they would produce 21% of our total energy requirement
- Grassland covers 43% (63,616ha) of the High Weald AONB
- 53% of farms are classified as ‘other’ – a reflection that many are enterprises that don’t fit neatly into standard agricultural classifications



# Living off the land

## Master of change

As a boy, **Keith Datchler** helped out at the dairy farm across the road before school. He has just celebrated his 41st year at the 2,000-acre Beech Farm Estate near Battle, working his way up from dairy herdsman to estate manager.

"In 1947 Sir John Wells bought the 200-acre farm to convert into a country home but developed a passion for the land, and forestry in particular, and the estate grew to include the addition of 1,200 acres of forestry land.

"The biggest change has been our decision to stop farming the dairy herd 13 years ago. Milk quotas had been falling and we were worried about the viability of the business. The risk was too great. The dairy herd went, we converted buildings to office and workshop space and

let the workers' cottages. As a dairy farm we employed 13 people, today we employ one.

"The other change is that we converted all our pasture to biodiverse, flower rich grassland so the estates are now registered organic land. Today we sell the rights to graze but maintain control over land management. I regard managing for biodiversity essential – biodiversity equals food security, but we'd struggle to do it without stewardship payments.

"I worry that farming has lost a generation, so many of the people I deal with are my age, I see very few young people coming into farming and land management. If we don't have the skilled, knowledgeable people choosing careers in land management who will do it?"



**"I worry that farming has lost a generation"**

## Woodland wonder

**Gill Hernon** owns 10 acres of woodland, Tannin Wood in Waste Wood, near Buxted, with her husband, a carpenter by trade. They bought the wood because of a long-held appreciation of woodland and a desire to contribute to nature conservation. The wood comprises oak standards over old sweet chestnut coppice stools with some beech.

Before 2008 the 150-acre Waste Wood, was owned privately as part of an investment portfolio (the average price of agricultural land has doubled over the past five years), then it was sold as 18 plots from 5 to 15 acres.

"I think Waste Wood is an excellent example of how well small woodland ownership can work when all the woodland owners work together," said Gill.

"One of the main things that has brought us together is our involvement with the Historic Environment Awareness Project, which has supported us in exploring and mapping the archaeological features in the woodland – features such as ancient charcoal hearths and remnants of iron-making industries from centuries ago. We also share advice, knowledge and contacts. The Forestry Commission has been very helpful, advising us on managing the wood."



**"Waste Wood is an excellent example of how well small woodland ownership can work when all the woodland owners work together"**

## The 'Oil Baron'



**Alex Ball** runs his forestry business from Udimore and supplies birch for jumps to race courses including Ascot and Cheltenham. He does not own land but buys the rights to harvest wood by the acre. He has worked in forestry for 16 years and sold a marquee hire business last year to invest in forestry full-time. He has bought new machinery, including a saw mill, with grants from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership (WARR).

"A lot of people say there's no money in forestry, but I've never held that view. It's about identifying value in a parcel of timber and finding the right market for it, whether it's birch saplings for race jumps, hazel for beanpoles, wood for building, furniture or firewood."

"Demand for quality firewood is the best

I've known it. I liken myself to an oil baron! In my imagination, obviously, which is quite vivid!" Alex says, roaring with laughter.

"My concerns for the future are changing ownership of our woodlands. When a wood is lotted into small plots it is no longer productive and erodes what is left of our rural economy. I think it would be a disaster if Forestry Commission land was sold off.

"The more involved I get the more opportunities I see for wood product. At the moment I'm interested in the use of chestnut as a building material."

**"The more involved I get the more opportunities I see"**

## Shepherd with vision

**M**eg Lucas, 20, always wanted to work with animals and bought her first ewe aged just 13. Since then she has built her flock of sheep to 120, including 70 breeding ewes and two rams with 127 lambs expected in 2011.

Meg grazes her sheep on small parcels of land around Horam, grazing some 15 acres over six plots of land.

"You could say I'm self taught; I've been helping out on farms in the holidays and weekends when at school, so have picked up a lot. I don't think I need to go to college, I just want to get on with developing my business."

"On some of the land I graze I have a formal contract, which is good as it gives me security, on other fields we have an informal arrangement and in return I give them some lamb. Typically the people who own my grazing have bought a house with some land attached and they just need it kept tidy.

"My ambition is to build my flock to 300, that would be large enough to support me full time but I would need to have larger parcels of land. Ultimately I would like to rent my own farm. My current flock is as big as I can handle being so spread out."



**"I was checking the sheep's feet when my ram headbutted me and knocked me out cold!"**



**"My greatest fear is the slow urbanisation of the countryside. Actually, I'm not sure it's even that slow!"**

## A family affair

**D**avid Wright is the third generation of his family to work Brownings Farm at Blackboys. The farm has changed significantly during his family's tenure as the business has adapted to survive. David's grandfather bought the 200-acre Dowerhouse Farm in the 1950s and ran a dairy herd, which he built to around 200 cows on 1,000 acres, renting arable land for straw as well.

David's father diversified the business almost 20 years ago: farm cottages were rented as holiday lets, agricultural buildings were converted to office and workshop space and the dairy herd was sold. Since then the pasture has been grazed extensively with sheep from Romney Marsh in the winter and beef cattle in the summer.

Today David runs a furniture business, using local sustainably sourced wood, and manages the farm woodland with help from his brother, Andy, a forestry consultant.

"One of the biggest problems we face is people walking pet dogs. We have footpaths crossing our land and have registered some land as open access but we have had sheep killed most years and almost as worrying is the constant stream of dogs off leads just unsettling the sheep a little.

"There has been a big change in the environmental awareness applied to farming over the past 50 years and this has been supported very well through government grants."

## Working with wood

**A**ndy Groombridge's father worked in timber haulage, so he helped to load timber while still at school and has been working woodland for 28 years.

"In those days we loaded timber by hand, my Dad obviously thought I was strong enough and it all started there. In recent years I have been able to invest in a forwarder (a tractor with hydraulic grab to lift logs) and a log processor.

"The biggest change I've seen is the end product for the wood. When I started out everything went to pulp – there was a big paper mill at Sittingbourne – I stopped selling them wood for pulp just after the '87 storm.

"Today I concentrate almost entirely on logs for firewood, for a time things were very tight but the demand for firewood is good; with the increasing cost of heating oil and people's desire for a sustainable carbon neutral fuel, more people are using logs.

"My hopes and fears for the future?" he laughs. "Well, I hope to be able to make a living from this way of life and my fear is that I won't!

"I find it sad to see fencing from imported softwood. Do people know they cut those trees down and have to replant and then ship it hundreds of miles? We have acres of chestnut coppice right here that we cut and it regrows! And it is a hardwood, it doesn't need treatment with chemicals to make it last."

**"I find it sad to see fencing from imported softwood. We have acres of chestnut coppice right here"**



# The changing face of the High Weald

# The fattening land

How one woman, striving to get more money for her chickens at market, put Heathfield on the map...

**K**eeping chickens as pets, to produce a few eggs or even for meat, has become hugely popular in recent times. Whether this is simply a desire to connect with our food or concerns about health and welfare in some areas of farming, especially imported meat, the rising cost of quality food definitely makes the effort of growing or rearing your own food worthwhile.

Chicken is a staple British meat today, with many of us eating it once or twice a week but it used to be considered a luxury, reserved for the wealthy and special occasions.

If you were a rural craftsman or woodsman living near Heathfield in the 1700s you would have had to work hard to make a living, so it seems likely that people gave a lot of thought, probably discussing the matter with neighbours, about how to get a little bit more meat on to their livestock.

So when, in 1788, Mrs Kezia Collins, of Cade Street, Heathfield, seized upon the idea of force-feeding her chickens spare oats, rendered fat and condensed milk to fatten them up and get more money for them at market, not surprisingly the idea caught on.

Mrs Collins' idea caught on so well, in fact, that for more than 100 years Heathfield became the centre of a chicken fattening industry. By 1900 it was sending £150,000 (\*£14 million in today's money) worth of chicken a year by train to the meat markets in London. Chickens were brought from as far afield as Ireland and Wales to be fattened here – in the late 1890s 300,000 birds a year were sent from Ireland.

The High Weald has a long tradition of fattening animals. The steep sided valleys, heavy clay and light sandy soils will not easily support arable farming, so the High Weald has largely remained a wooded landscape with pasture. For thousands of years people drove their pigs, later cattle, into the woodlands to fatten them in the autumn on the bountiful crop of acorns.

\* Source: The Bank of England



Fattening chickens for table use at H. Bean and Sons, Heathfield, 1931



## The Sussex Chicken

The Sussex is a very old breed, records go back to the mid-19th century, but it is certainly much older than that. The oldest variety of Sussex is the speckled, the newest is the Silver. The Light Sussex has been popular in the High Weald for at least 200 years and is the most widely kept breed of chicken in Britain today. The Sussex Breed Club, formed in 1903, is one of the oldest breed clubs in Britain.

## Food news



**Biddenden Vineyards** has added a sparkling cider to its range. It is bottle fermented in the traditional method to create a dry, refreshing drink. It is strong, at 10.5%abv and provides an alternative to the still Kentish ciders Biddenden is famous for.

[www.biddendenvineyards.com](http://www.biddendenvineyards.com)

**High Weald Dairy** has a new cheese, Sussex Marble, based on their organic Saint Giles, infused with garlic and herbs, made with its own organic cows' milk. Perfect for melting on a jacket potato or a steak, as a substitute for garlic butter, or enjoy as part of a cheese board with crusty bread.

[www.highwealddairy.co.uk](http://www.highwealddairy.co.uk)



**The Westerham Brewery** is now open six days a week; Mon to Fri 10am-5pm and Sat 10am-2pm for the collection of beer. Draught beer is available in 9 pint minicasks, 18 pint minipins and 36 pint polypins plus a range of bottled beers.

[www.westerhambrewery.co.uk](http://www.westerhambrewery.co.uk)

The success of the chicken industry owed itself to a combination of Heathfield's southerly aspect, poor, free-draining sandy soil, proximity to the more productive Low Weald where oats and milks were readily available, a rural population who needed to exploit every opportunity to earn a crust and, when the railways came in the late 19th century, fast transport to London's meat markets.

Although it seems barbaric to us to cram a chicken's gullet with energy rich food twice a day for two weeks to artificially fatten it, this was an industry born of peasant traditions. Just ordinary people rearing a few chickens to make ends meet. Some people reared a few chickens and other people bought them, fattened them and sold them on for a small profit.

Then there was the "higgler" – the Arthur Daley of the Heathfield chicken industry! Higglers travelled the area on foot buying chickens from those who reared them and selling them on to those who fattened them, buying chickens from those who fattened them, then selling them on at markets. Interestingly, the rearing and fattening was traditionally carried out by different people.

By 1895 chicken production in the High Weald was centred around an area West to East, Buxted to Brightling, and North to South, Rotherfield to Hellingly. Chickens were transported to Smithfield and other London markets, as well as to the south coast, from Heathfield, Uckfield and Ticehurst stations.

The demise of the industry by the late 1950s was not because of any sensitivity to animal welfare, but rather the arrival of a source of cheap chicken meat: the "broiler". A breed of chicken that does only one thing well – it gains weight – it can reach market weight in half the time of any other breed, just four weeks from hatching.

It is a bird that can only survive in artificial surroundings, it is inactive and does not forage well, which helps it to gain weight quickly. The natural environment of the High Weald, that was so well suited to traditional chicken rearing, was no longer relevant and chicken production largely moved elsewhere.

Our motivation for keeping chickens today may be slightly different but the popularity of a few birds scratching around in a back garden is not new. In the High Weald it is an age-old tradition.

**The Old Dairy Farm & Shop** at Furners Green has a new website to coincide with the expansion of its farm by 195 acres of organic grass and arable land. This means they will soon be able to add organic lamb and beef to their other produce sold directly from the farm.

[www.theolddairyfarmshop.co.uk](http://www.theolddairyfarmshop.co.uk)



If you spot a large bird soaring in the sky, its straight wings motionless, the tips of its wing feathers curled upwards, tail spread out, you are likely to be looking at the UK's commonest and most widespread bird of prey, the Buzzard.

It soars in the air, its keen eyesight scanning the ground for prey; small mammals, birds and carrion. On spying one of these, it swoops, quickly and accurately, grasping and killing its prey with its sharp, strong talons. Or it will locate its prey from a perch and may even be seen walking, or rather hopping with an ungainly gait, or just waiting on the ground looking for invertebrates if other food is in short supply.

The area's wooded hillsides are a favourite habitat, yet it is only recently that Buzzards, usually seen on their own or in pairs, have become a common sight above the High Weald. In the 1800s they were widespread, but then they largely disappeared: hunted almost to the point of extinction by the Victorians, persecuted by gamekeepers, population crashes as myxo-



# Return of the native

Michael Colquhoun www.birdguides.com

matoxis decimated their favourite prey – the rabbit – and the use of organochlorine pesticides, such as DDT, in the 1950s and 1960s, which affected the birds' ability to reproduce. As more wildlife-friendly land management has returned, so has the Buzzard; but it wasn't until the 1990s that they began to recolonise the south and east of England.

The birds, which are variable in colour from dark brown to much paler variations, soar, display and call mostly in the spring. You may hear a Buzzard before you spot one. It has a plaintive peeoo call, similar to a cat's meow and can often be heard from a considerable distance.

The Sussex Ornithological Society has been recording Buzzard distribution for the last three winters and there are still plenty of areas in the High Weald where Buzzards have not been noted. You can help the society to collect "Roving Records" that will inform the new Bird Atlas for Sussex. It is easy – just download a recording form from [www.sos.org.uk](http://www.sos.org.uk) note your sightings and send it back!

# Countryside Site News

## Art in motion

A new sculpture trail is open at **Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods**, near Horsham. Volunteers from Horsham Green Gym and pupils from Forest and Millais secondary schools worked alongside local artists to create a new dimension to this popular countryside site.



Same Sky

## Woodland secrets

'**Nymans Woods**' is a publication that will encourage visitors to explore the woodland surrounding the National Trust garden at Nymans. The area is a showcase for Wealden woods and is full of highlights: the tallest tree in Sussex, sandstone outcrops, the lake – a former hammer pond – cascades and a wildflower meadow. Plus tales of preachers, highwaymen and ancient industry. The woods are open at all times. The leaflet, available from the Nymans shop, costs £1.50.



## Grow wild

Anyone interested in creating a wildflower grassland may wish to visit a demonstration site in **Bloomer's Valley at Wakehurst Place** this summer. Field-scale plots display a range of enhancement techniques, including spreading green hay, whole crop meadow material and combined grass and wildflower seed.

**W**eald Meadows Initiative  
[www.highwealdlandscapetrust.org/projects.php?id=15](http://www.highwealdlandscapetrust.org/projects.php?id=15)  
 and  
[www.kew.org/restoration-ecology/index.html](http://www.kew.org/restoration-ecology/index.html)

## On the water

At **Weirwood Reservoir** there are new view-points across the water, rafts for nesting Terns and a renovated waterside picnic area, plus 1km of enhancements to the Sussex Border Path.



National Trust



John Bogle

## Calling butterfly fans

If you would like to be involved in butterfly conservation contact the **Rother Guardians**, local volunteers who are continuing the work of the Rother Woods Project (which ended on March 31, 2011). They are continuing to collate and publish butterfly records for the area and are supporting a variety of local conservation projects.  
 E: [rotherguardians@gmail.com](mailto:rotherguardians@gmail.com)  
 Blog: [www.rotherguardians.blogspot.com](http://www.rotherguardians.blogspot.com)



Weald Meadows Initiative

## Look back in wonder

A new history trail at the RSPB's reserve at **Broadwater Forest** guides visitors around the reserve, interpreting the many lumps and bumps uncovered through restoration work. An All Ability Path from the car park to the heath will be in place by summer (in time for the Nightjar season). The guide is available from the information board in the main car park.

## Pondlife

The murky pond at Rudyard Kipling's house, **Bateman's**, in Burwash, has been transformed. The National Trust has planted Yellow Iris, reeds and sedges around its edge and dozens of carp, which eat frog and toad spawn and tadpoles, dragonfly and damselfly larvae, have been removed. As a result visitors will see a more natural pond teeming with aquatic life.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods sculptures; Silver-washed Fritillary; harvesting meadow hay; Olive Crescent moth; restoring the mill pond at Batemans; launch of the Sussex Border Path enhancements.

## Rare find

**Eridge Rocks**, best known for its sandstone outcrops, is also an excellent habitat for moths, light trapping by Sussex Wildlife Trust staff during 2010 has revealed. Nearly 100 species new to the reserve were recorded and some of the rarer woodland moth species were discovered including: Olive Crescent, Waved Carpet, Festoon and Rosy Marbled.



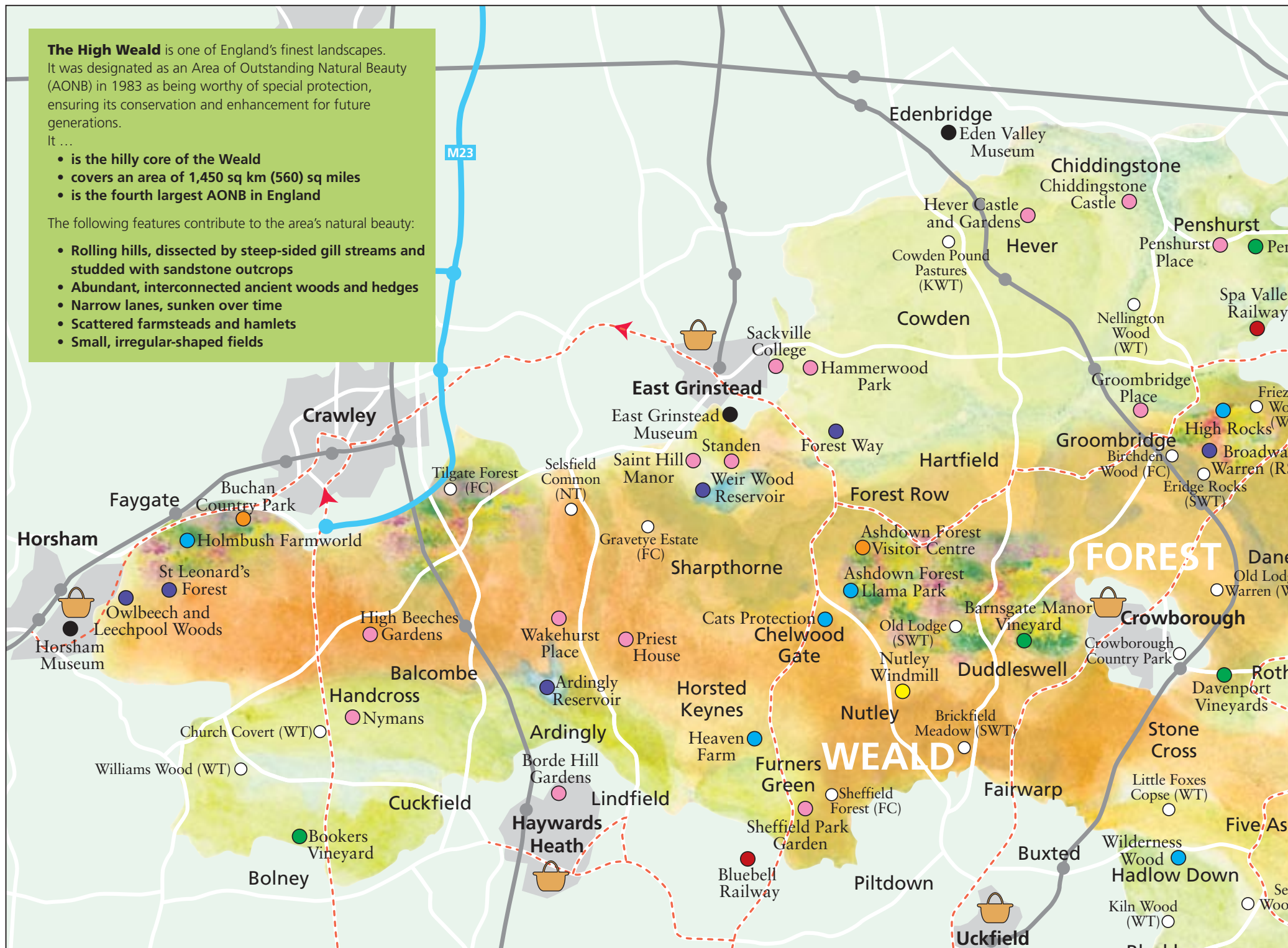
Graeme Lyons

**W** [www.sussexwt.org.uk/reserves/page00014.htm](http://www.sussexwt.org.uk/reserves/page00014.htm)

**The High Weald** is one of England's finest landscapes. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983 as being worthy of special protection, ensuring its conservation and enhancement for future generations.

- It ...
- is the hilly core of the Weald
  - covers an area of 1,450 sq km (560) sq miles
  - is the fourth largest AONB in England

- The following features contribute to the area's natural beauty:
- Rolling hills, dissected by steep-sided gill streams and studded with sandstone outcrops
  - Abundant, interconnected ancient woods and hedges
  - Narrow lanes, sunken over time
  - Scattered farmsteads and hamlets
  - Small, irregular-shaped fields



## Bewl Water Outdoor Centre





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[www.plumpton.ac.uk](http://www.plumpton.ac.uk)

Tel 01273 892052

### KEY

**Visitor Attractions**

- Houses, Gardens & Castles
- Vineyards
- Farms, Woods and Reservoirs
- Railways
- Windmills
- Museums

**Countryside sites open to the public**

- Country Parks
- Other major countryside sites
- Other countryside sites

KWT Kent Wildlife Trust  
SWT Sussex Wildlife Trust  
WT Woodland Trust  
FC Forestry Commission  
NT National Trust

🛒 Farmers' markets

—●— Railway & station

- - - Main bus routes

# Visiting the High Weald



For additional information on accommodation; farmers' markets; local cycle rides; countryside sites.

This map shows the range of places you can visit in the High Weald and their approximate location. It is to be used as a guide only and is not an accurate representation.

## For history fans

**Medieval Fair**

August 27- 29, 2011

More than 1,000 knights, bowmen and men-at-arms will lay siege to Herstmonceux Castle in the 19th spectacular reconstruction – the largest in England – of a medieval battle with full cannon support. Many other activities and entertainments bring the period to life.

**1066 and all that**

October 8-9, 2011

Experience the atmosphere and tension of the Battle of Hastings at a re-enactment at Battle Abbey as more than 400 soldiers clash in the annual spectacular on the very site where the history-defining battle took place.

## For garden enthusiasts

**Pashley Manor Tulip Festival**

April 27 to May 8

Wonder at a spectacular display of 22,000 tulips in many hues set against the backdrop of a stunning Elizabethan timber-framed house at Pashley Manor Gardens, Ticehurst.

**Garden Open Days**

The National Garden Scheme is a golden opportunity to explore and get ideas from other enthusiasts' gardens:

**Balcombe**, Wed May 18, Sat June 18, noon-5pm

**Dormans Park Safari, Dormans Park**, Sun June 5

**Bidborough, Tunbridge Wells**, Sun June 12

**Gill Road Gardens, Crowborough**, Wed and Sat June 15 and 18

**Winchelsea**, Sat June 25

**Wildflower and Wildlife Weekend**

June 26-27

Discover the rich diversity of plants and wildlife in the meadow at High Beeches Gardens, West Sussex, with guided tours from a host of experts.

# What's on

There is so much happening in the High Weald countryside that we cannot list everything. Instead we recommend you visit [www.highweald.org/events](http://www.highweald.org/events) where you can search through myriad activities to find something to suit you. Below are some of the annual highlights that we hope will tempt you to enjoy our diverse area of outstanding natural beauty.



High Beeches

## For families

**AshFest**

May 21

A celebration at the Ashdown Forest Centre of all things "sheepy": make a "horned" headdress and a memento from brightly coloured fleece. Be part of a "flock" that meanders through the Forest to decorate a giant sheep sculpture with woven willow emblems and dance to the band. There will be a prize for the best homemade shepherd's crook.

**Heathfield & District Agricultural Show**

May 28

A traditional country show; proud stockmen will parade their animals, the hunts will display their hounds and you can learn about the farming year with a display of the equipment needed every day at the 64th annual event. Plus motorbike display, jazz band and craft stalls.

## For wildlife lovers

**Heavenly Bluebells**

April to early May

Sites known for their spectacular displays include Heaven Farm, Furners Green, near Uckfield; Wilderness Wood, Hadlow Down; and Hole Park Gardens near Cranbrook.

**Nightjar Week**

May 31-June 4

The RSPB nature reserve at Broadwater Warren, Tunbridge Wells, offers a week of talks about the nightjar and other wildlife, such as woodcock and glow worms, plus an opportunity to see and hear these elusive, evocative, nocturnal birds.

## For skill seekers

There are a variety of new skills you can learn while enjoying the landscape of the High Weald. Historic gardens are the setting for learning to paint, taking photographs, perfecting gardening techniques and art using natural materials; woodlands are the place to learn rural crafts such as making chestnut hurdles, chairs and roof shingles. Search on training at [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) for full details.

## Events news

**Subsidised training**

Subsidies of up to 50 per cent are available to people living and carrying out work in the Weald Forest Ridge area for courses with three specialist training providers: **Plumpton College** at the Netherfield Centre, **Esus Forestry** and the **Weald and Downland Open Air Museum**. Courses include building conservation, woodland management and food, farming and rural skills.

[www.highweald.org/home/weald-forest-ridge](http://www.highweald.org/home/weald-forest-ridge)

**Countryside 2011**

May 28 to June 12 celebrates a variety of events and activities you can enjoy across the High Weald and South East of England. There will be a host of special offers during the fortnight and many events are free.

[www.countryside2011.org.uk](http://www.countryside2011.org.uk)

**Find a guide**

Take a guided walk through the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and discover new places on your doorstep. The new **Explore Kent** guided walks web pages offer thousands of guided walks across the county year-round.

[www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent) or call 08458 247600

**Woodland walks**

The **Woodland Trust** is running new events at two of its sites: Hargate Forest, a little-known 150-acre wood you can walk to from the centre of Tunbridge Wells and Brede High Woods, near Battle, one of the Trust's largest and newest woodlands, which has a fascinating history – it once housed Roman iron smelters, sheltered charcoal makers and was the site of a gunpowder and cannon factory. Events to suit all ages and interests. Most are free, so book early.

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)



Woodland Trust

**Ashdown Forest Llama Park**

Over 100 Llamas & Alpacas • Meet our lovely Reindeer  
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[www.llamapark.co.uk](http://www.llamapark.co.uk)

**Ashdown Forest Llama Park**  
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Wych Cross, Forest Row, E.Sx, RH18 5JN  
Tel: 01825 712040 Email: [info@llamapark.co.uk](mailto:info@llamapark.co.uk)  
Open daily 10am to 5pm

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[enquiries@wildernesswood.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wildernesswood.co.uk)  
Wilderness Wood, Hadlow Down, E. Sussex  
(on the A272 4 miles East of Uckfield)

# Attractions news



Surdcliffe Play

## Let's play

At the National Trust's **Standen** property the area where the Beale family's children played is being opened into a play area for modern youngsters. A 1920s style base camp will have areas for den making, a Victorian style stumpery and a rock stack reflecting the estate's natural outcrops.

## Restoration piece

The 80-yard double herbaceous border at **Penshurst Place** reopens this summer, restored to a design by the Chelsea gold medallist George Carter. It will have stone benches set into the borders, historic varieties of apple trees and colour co-ordinated herbaceous and shrub planting.

## A world in miniature

A collection of pedal-powered cars and toys will delight visitors of all ages at a museum in Northiam. **The Mill Toy and Pedal Car Museum** houses exhibits dating from Victorian times and will provide a trip down memory lane for many visitors. It includes one of the largest collections of pedal cars in Europe. The museum, near the Kent & East Sussex Railway, offers all valid K&ESR ticket holders a £1 per person discount on its entry fee making it a great value combined trip.

[www.themilltoymuseum.com](http://www.themilltoymuseum.com)  
T: 01797 253803



The Mill and Toy Pedal Car Museum

## Wild and wonderful

**Marle Place Gardens**, near Horsmonden, has an extended wildlife area; a new bridge crosses a typical Wealden stream and more of the surrounding woodland can be explored. Information along the route will highlight seasonal and incidental interest. Peruse the blackboard and nature book in the tea room where the public note their sightings.

## Special cargo

The Cavell Van which carried the body of the Unknown Soldier from Dover Docks to London's Victoria Station on November 10, 1920 is on view at the **Kent and East Sussex Railway** in Tenterden. In May 1919 it carried the body of Edith Cavell and two months later the remains of merchant seaman Captain Charles Fryatt. Newsreel footage from The British Pathé Film Archive will show scenes of the burial processions.

# On the tea-time trail

A new High Street chain promises a return of the Lyons Corner-style tea houses to our towns. Older readers will remember them and the Nippies, who literally nipped between the tables, elegant in their smart black and white uniforms. The first Lyons teashop opened in Piccadilly, London, in 1894 and the first Corner House in 1909 and became a popular feature of many high streets in Britain but sadly disappeared in the late 1970s.

Evoking memories of that bygone era the first Cadbury Cocoa House opened at the Bluewater shopping centre in October last year, which made us wonder how our traditional village tea rooms are faring in these recessionary times. Cafés and tea rooms are part and parcel of many tourist attractions, garden centres and even farm shops – and all seem to be flourishing. We put our heads together and came up with the following list for the High Weald, at least three of the teashops have opened in the last year and only one has closed. They may be few and far between but the independent tearoom lives on – a testimony to their delicious homemade food, location and individual character.



*Why not take time out for a lovely cup of tea...and try somewhere new for a change?*

Please check opening times before visiting.

**Balcombe Tea Rooms**, run by Christine and Marie, attracts clientele from a wide area and is popular with walkers and cyclists at weekends. T: 01444 811777

**Sharphorne Organic Café** is a social enterprise that sources ingredients locally and trains adults with learning difficulties in cooking and waitressing. It sells a wide range of wheat and gluten-free and dairy-free meals. T: 01342 811321 [www.sharphorneorganiccafe.blogspot.com/2008/02/cream-teas-are-back.html](http://www.sharphorneorganiccafe.blogspot.com/2008/02/cream-teas-are-back.html)

**St Ives Tea Garden**, near Hartfield, a flower-filled tea garden has beautiful views and strutting peacocks. T: 01892 770589

**Piglet's Tearoom and Garden**, Hartfield (no savouries) great for "a Little Something!" – Smackerels, Tigger's Treats, 100 Aker cakes, Whatnots and Etceteras. The website reminds potential customers that it's "thirsty work hunting for Woozles!" T: 01892 770456 [www.pooh-country.co.uk/pigletstearoom.php](http://www.pooh-country.co.uk/pigletstearoom.php)

**Duddleswell Tea Rooms**, handily located on Ashdown Forest, has been serving tea since 1936 in a building that was extended in the 1800s from a cottage built in 1658; run by siblings John and Tanya. T: 01825 712126 [www.duddleswelltearooms.co.uk](http://www.duddleswelltearooms.co.uk)

**The Junction Inn Tearoom**, Groombridge, adjoins the pub and was built to house the navvies who built the Spa Valley Steam Railway, opposite. Its cheerful decor pays homage to its railway origins. T: 01892 864275 [www.thejunctioninnngroombridge.co.uk/tearoom.html](http://www.thejunctioninnngroombridge.co.uk/tearoom.html)

Mayfield is awash with tearooms: **Peckish** has views of the church, T: 01435 873375; **April Cottage**, at the end of the High Street (limited opening hours), is traditional T: 01435 872160, and the newly opened café above **The Flower House**, is modern. T: 01435 873984 [www.theflowerhouse.biz](http://www.theflowerhouse.biz).

**Lime Tree Tea Rooms**, Burwash, is a small family business run by Jane and Ian Tasker, and is open throughout the winter. T: 01435 882221

### The Junction Inn Tearoom



Penshurst has two: **Quaintways Tea Rooms**, T: 01892 870272 and **Fir Tree House Tea Rooms** T: 01892 87038.

**Wealden Wholefoods**, Wadhurst, is a mid-17th-century shop full of nooks and crannies with a small café and garden at the rear. They serve organic, local and Fairtrade foods. Local artwork adds to the ambience. T: 01892 783065 [www.wealdenwholefoods.co.uk](http://www.wealdenwholefoods.co.uk)

**Ticehurst Bookshop**, one of the largest antiquarian and secondhand bookshops in the South East of England, serves refreshments – their baguettes are freshly baked – to quell your hunger as you browse. T: 01580 201227 [www.picrare.com/bookshop/Ticehurst%20bookshop.htm](http://www.picrare.com/bookshop/Ticehurst%20bookshop.htm)

**Sandhurst Tea Room** serves traditional baked goods (no savouries). Tea terrace at the back. T: 01580 850745

**The Winchelsea Farm Kitchen Tea Room** is situated at the back of a new food and wine emporium and has a conservatory and courtyard garden. Their fish pie is made with the freshest of fish caught by the nearby Rye Harbour fleet. T: 01797 226287 [www.winchelseafarmkitchen.co.uk](http://www.winchelseafarmkitchen.co.uk)

**The Avocet Tea Room** at Rye Harbour is next to the nature reserve. The menu reflects seasonal produce and showcases traditional Sussex recipes. There is also an art gallery. T: 01797 223005 [www.avocetgalleryandtea.co.uk/gallery.html](http://www.avocetgalleryandtea.co.uk/gallery.html)

**Coppice**

Woodland where the trees are cut periodically and then left to re-grow from the cut stumps, known as stools. The re-growth has multiple stems, known as poles. Managing trees as coppice provides small diameter timber which has many uses, such as for making fencing.



10 points

**Bank**

Built over centuries to mark landowners' boundaries and to protect areas from grazing animals. They can range in size from subtle bumps to substantial features topped with mature trees.



10 points

**Farmstead**

Over 38% of the area's houses are in the countryside outside villages – farmstead buildings arranged along a track are particularly characteristic of the High Weald.



5 points

**Outgrown hedgerow trees**

Where a laid hedge once topped a boundary bank, remains of the hedgerow may be identified by the presence of branches with right-angled 'elbows'. These are where the former 'laid' branch or stem has turned through 90° to grow towards the light.



15 points

**EYE SPY**



Some of the features that make the High Weald special

**The points system:**

- 5 Features easily seen when driving around the High Weald
- 10 Features harder to see when driving around the High Weald
- 15 Features easy to see on a walk or in certain areas or sites within the High Weald

From the **Eye Spy High Weald** booklet, which highlights 60 features that help to make the area one of England's finest landscapes. For a free copy please enter your contact details at [www.highweald.org/eyespy](http://www.highweald.org/eyespy) or T: 01580 879500.

**Sussex cattle**

They have a dark, conker-coloured coat, a gentle nature and are a hardy breed that can thrive on the poorer grasslands of the High Weald, some of which are rare wildlife habitats.



5 points

**Iron-stained water**

This is found where there are iron-rich rocks nearby. As the water passes through the rocks it picks up some of the iron minerals, turning the water a rusty red.



15 points

**Ferns**

In the High Weald, ferns prefer shady, moist conditions and are found on sandrock outcrops, alongside gills and sunken lanes, and in woodlands - often alongside mosses, liverworts and lichens which like similar conditions.



10 points

**Gill**

A steep-sided, sinuous, narrow and often wooded valley with small, fast-flowing streams where rare liverworts and mosses grow. The woods are often ancient.



15 points

**Wildflower verge**

Many grassy roadside verges have escaped 'improvement' and are an important home to wildflower species. Early June to the end of July is the best time to see colourful species such as pale pink Orchids and purple Knapweed.



10 points

**Gorse**

A spiny shrub which likes dry, sandy soils, so is common on heaths. It flowers from late autumn through winter, and comes into flower most strongly in spring. Its flowers have a coconut scent.



5 points

**Timber-framed building**

Timber was the most readily available building material until the 17th century and many timber-framed buildings remain in the area. They often have a lopsided or irregular appearance as they were made with green or freshly cut wood, which twisted and bent as it dried out.



10 points

**Laid hedge**

Hedgelaying is an ancient craft used to keep the hedge stockproof. The hedge's stems are partially cut and then bent over at an angle - preventing sheep pushing through and encouraging the hedge to bush out. If hedges are left unladen, they become gappy at the bottom.



15 points

**Fingerpost**

The old style of road direction sign. They were put up following an Act of Parliament in 1903 which gave local authorities the responsibility for road signs.



5 points



# A walk on the wild side

Gerry Sherwin on why the High Weald is such a great place to explore... and the trials and tribulations of walking with children!

**“Would you like to play hide and seek? Pooh sticks? Go on an adventure to find the fairies of Vicarage Wood?”**

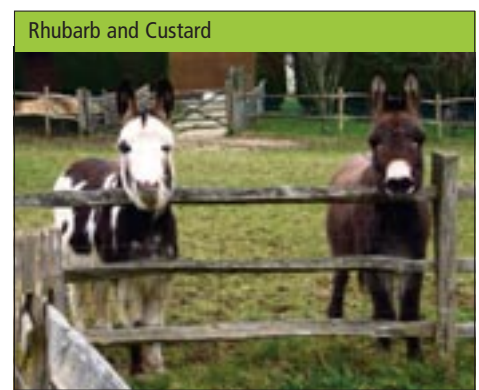
I'll try anything that doesn't include the word "walk" to encourage my daughter to get some fresh air and exercise. As a two-year old she strode (or should I say waddled) local paths putting her new-found walking skills to the test but since she discovered the world of Barbie some encouragement is required.

**I won't give up, though.** Once out there she enjoys it, we all do. Bribes follow: "How about a snack when we get to the top of the track? And hot chocolate (winter), ice-cream (summer) when we get home?" A glimmer of interest. Finally, "You can't stay here on you own, the dog needs a walk, come on let's go!"

We start slowly, bland pavements never hold much interest but what's fantastic about living in this area is that it is easy to get into the fields and woods using local footpaths, originally created to connect the scattered farmsteads and surrounding villages. She's not quite dragging her feet but the dog's enthusiasm begins to rub off on her and her feet have picked up as we turn on to the footpath and by the time we reach the field she's running downhill towards the stile. The fun begins. Stiles, useful climbing practice, definitely not as challenging as tree

climbing but there are lots of ways you can get over a stile into the High Weald. Some require a bit of a stretch, good leg-swinging ability, a jump on the other side. If there's a dog gate there is always the "see if you can squeeze through the gap" option and hope the responsible adult is concentrating and doesn't chop off your head!

**Some sheep with** dark stripes approach us. We say hello and wonder what breed they are; something to look up when we get home. Around our village much of the land seems to be managed as smallholdings, it's not quite a farm visit but sometimes we see sheep, horses, donkeys, chickens and pigs.



## Journey Sticks

An easy, fun children's activity suitable for any outdoor walk.

**Equipment:** An interesting stick (easy to carry), a length of wool or elastic bands.

**Time:** Can be used throughout the whole walk or just a section of it.

**Activity:** Encourage your child to pick up natural objects you find along the way, such as leaves, feathers, bark and seeds. Either wrap them on to the stick with the wool or tuck them under elastic bands wound on to the stick as a memento of their journey, which can be used to help relate their experiences to friends and family back at home.



Who needs exercise weights when you can walk with a pound of Wealden clay on your wellies?

Elizabeth Randall

**Next we are in the woods.** When it's wet we slither and slide down the steep slope of the gill into a hidden world. It's here that we linger. A new bridge crosses the stream – time to play Pooh sticks. I have brought a flask of coffee and find a tree stump while my daughter plays. Water is a big appeal. There's a stretch where she can safely paddle and poke around with a stick. Meanwhile, I wonder about the people who would have used the water and timber of these woodlands in the past. I imagine the ringing of hammers in forges, woodland workers tending smokey, charcoal hearths... A cry of "I've got water in my welly!" interrupts my reverie. It's time to go. The narrow, twisting, ups and downs of the woodland tracks are fun before we face the trek back up the hill.

**It's at this point** enthusiasm tends to waver. Time for some motivational techniques: "Simple Simon", pushing/pulling, "Your granny had to walk two miles a day to school!" We compare clods of sticky, clayey, mud on our boots, which refuse to budge despite our gymnastic antics. Luckily there are water-filled potholes in the lane, which clean our boots (a bit) and provide a diversion.

At last, we're home. We were only out for an hour but we have a renewed vigour. The muddy clothes are soaking in a bucket. I know this phase is shortlived, I am already thinking about how to motivate her when she's older: geo-caching (high-tech treasure hunting) sounds fun and maybe spooky night walks will appeal as they will be "cool". Who knows? I'll make the most of this phase while I can.

Primary schoolchildren across the High Weald are being encouraged to explore the countryside using local paths. Many schools have created a circular Welly Walk from the school gate and have produced a leaflet. To find out of there is one near you go to [www.highweald.org/learn/education/welly-walks.html](http://www.highweald.org/learn/education/welly-walks.html)

## Little Walks

**Little Walks for the Little Ones** are downloadable guided walks to help families with toddlers get out into the countryside. There are nine short walks around sites in and around Tunbridge Wells, from an easy buggy walk at Dunorlan Park to a more challenging toddler walk at Eridge Rocks. Most sites have parking and toilets and information on fun activities for children. The project will be launched with free 'Toddle through Time' family events: **Dunorlan Park**, Tunbridge Wells, 12 April 11am-3pm; **Pepenburg Community Centre**, Pembury, 20 April 11am-3pm; **Birchden Wood**, Groombridge, 12 June 11am-3pm

[www.khwp.org.uk](http://www.khwp.org.uk)



# Caring and

There are many actions that can be undertaken to conserve and enhance the High Weald's special character and further people's enjoyment of it, some of which are shown in the image on the left; others are illustrated by the news items on these pages. To find out more about activities that will help ensure the area remains one of England's finest landscapes visit [www.highweald.org/look-after/how-you-can-help.html](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/how-you-can-help.html)



David Anstey

**FREE**

## Heritage visits

If you own more than one acre of land in the High Weald you are eligible for a free visit from the High Weald's Cultural Landscape Advisor. You can explore maps showing the historical development of your property and learn about its landscape, archaeology and wildlife. You will also receive free digital historical maps of your property and specialists' contact details.

**i** Matt Pitts T: 01580 879959  
[www.highweald.org/propertymanagement](http://www.highweald.org/propertymanagement)



## Outdoor learning activities

Join 60 schools in the area by pledging to be a High Weald Hero school and you'll benefit from a package of resources and activities to help your pupils learn about and explore the local countryside. Activities include themed assemblies, plays, workshops, drama and art days and Welly Walks. Resources include map packs; learning activity cards; DVDs of historical characters, historical costumes/props, Winnie-the-Pooh story sack and energy kits. The project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**i** Laura Sweeting T: 01580 879965  
[www.highweald.org/learningzone](http://www.highweald.org/learningzone)



Fran Southgate

## Wetland Restoration

The Sussex Wetland Landscapes Project is looking for landowners who would like to restore floodplain woodland on their land. Floodplain woodland is rare in Sussex but is crucial for the recovery of species such as the otter and the black poplar. Free trees, stakes and tubes are on offer, and, if labour is required, a team of enthusiastic volunteers to help plant up to three hectares of floodplain woodland.

**i** Fran Southgate  
T: 01273 497555  
E: [fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk](mailto:fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk)

## Seven wonders for £39.95!



The tourism group Seven Wonders of the Weald offers a cut-price pass to some of the area's attractions. It includes a number of free entries to The Hop Farm at Paddock Wood, Bedgebury National Pinetum, Marle Place Gardens and gallery, Chiddingstone Castle, Merriments Gardens, a two for one offer on the Kent & East Sussex Railway and a free cup of tea, glass of wine or apple juice at Biddenden Vineyards.

**i** [www.sevenwonders.org.uk](http://www.sevenwonders.org.uk)  
also available at Bedgebury, Biddenden Vineyards, Merriments Gardens or the Tunbridge Wells Gateway

## Conservation tool kit



You can borrow a conservation toolkit, free, from the Kent High Weald Partnership. The kit is designed to enable Tunbridge Wells residents to carry out practical work in their community. The kit includes tools such as slashers, billhooks and bowsaws, instructions and safety equipment. The project is funded by Kent County Council.

**i** E: [info@khwp.org.uk](mailto:info@khwp.org.uk) T: 01580 212972



Kent High Weald Partnership

## Woodland gardening

Forest Garden Shovelstrode is a new low impact, sustainable forest garden. Owners Charles Hooper and Lisa Aitken will use their experience of working as horticulturalists and the principles of permaculture, to demonstrate how to reduce our carbon footprint.

Existing ancient woodland provides a backdrop for Forest Gardening and Woodland Craft courses such as forest garden design and maintenance, basket weaving, trug and chair making, coracle boat building and boomerang making. Plants and seeds, fruits, honey, oils and dyes, and greenwood products will be on sale. Camping facilities available. The project is supported with Leader + funding from the Wealden & Rother Rural (WARR) Partnership.



# Conserving News

## Top beer!

Brewers WJ King won a silver medal at the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester for Kings Old Ale, in the old ales and strong milds category. The beer was created by Ian Burgess, head brewer, who bought the brewery with Nigel Lambe, chief executive, less than a year ago. Ian was previously with Harveys of Lewes for 19 years. Ian describes Kings Old Ale as having "an intense dry, coffee and slightly smoky aroma...with an aftertaste of liquorice".



**i** The brewery shop is based in Foundry Lane, Horsham open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday, 10am-2pm. Online sales at [www.kingbeer.co.uk](http://www.kingbeer.co.uk)

## Pizza on wheels

Pizza Verde is a food van with a difference – it contains a log-burning oven! Ron Lee, a professional chef who has worked at the Savoy, Claridges and Sussex Hotels group, as well as teaching professional chefs at Sussex College, brought the idea from France. His thin, crispy pizzas are made with fresh, locally bought produce and the wood is locally sourced oak offcuts.

**i** The van visits three villages in the area and can be booked for parties, weddings, festivals, gymkhanas and other events. T:07751 046989 [www.pizzaverde.co.uk](http://www.pizzaverde.co.uk)



## Phew! Pooh improved

A new car park and a safer, more pleasant and direct route to Pooh Bridge, at Hartfield in the Ashdown Forest, will be in place this summer – the culmination of ten years of negotiations between the council, local residents and user groups. It will address long-standing issues including limited parking, obstruction by parked cars and poorly signed and muddy paths. The bridge, originally called Posingford Bridge, inspired AA Milne, who lived nearby, to invent the game Poohsticks for his son Christopher Robin.



## Landowner advice



A project led by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Gatwick Greenspace Partnership, which operates in and around Horley, Crawley, Charlwood and Horsham, is offering free advice to landowners on land management for nature. Guidance on funding sources, help with grant applications and delivery of wildlife improvement works, such as tree and hedge-planting by its dedicated volunteers, are also on offer.

**i** Petra Billings E: [petrabillings@sussexwt.org.uk](mailto:petrabillings@sussexwt.org.uk). T: 01273 497515



## Wildlife volunteers

Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking volunteers to help at its nature reserves in the Weald. Every Monday you'll visit different reserves carrying out a range of practical conservation tasks from coppicing to meadow management. No previous experience necessary. A Task Programme can be found on the Kent Wildlife Trust website (Weald Programme).



**i** Matt Hayes E: [Matt.Hayes@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:Matt.Hayes@kentwildlife.org.uk)  
M: 07747 474364  
[www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk)

## Money talks

Grants of up to £750 are available from the High Weald Sustainable Development Fund for projects that promote, conserve or help people to enjoy the High Weald, to be completed by March 31, 2012. Anyone can apply. Assistance to complete the application form will be provided.

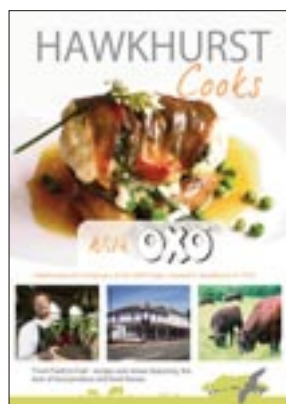
**i** Samantha Nicholas T: 01580 879500  
[www.highweald.org/grants](http://www.highweald.org/grants)



## Publications

Learn the history of Sussex trugs at [www.truggery.co.uk/historyofthetrug.asp](http://www.truggery.co.uk/historyofthetrug.asp). Trugs, used for harvesting crops, measuring or bagging grain are made from local timber though, sadly, there are now fewer than a handful of trug craftsmen.

To celebrate the centenary of the OXO cube, created in Hawkhurst in 1910, a book of local recipes and information on local producers has been published. Free copies of the Hawkhurst Cooks with Oxo Cookbook available from Jempsons, Hawkhurst Library and Parish Council Office on The Moor and the Kino digital cinema.



[www.visithawkhurst.org](http://www.visithawkhurst.org)

## Drama workshops

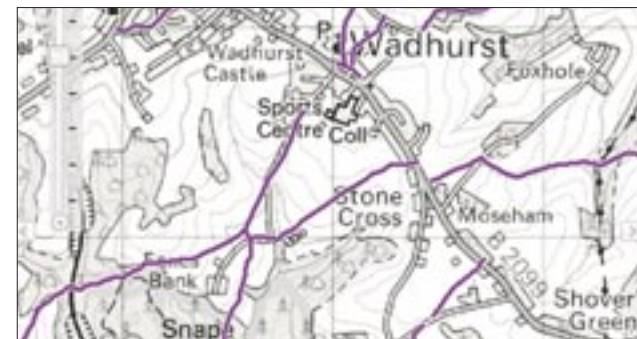
Develop your acting abilities with **The Company**, a respected theatre group, and discover more about people who are intertwined with the heritage of the area. Workshops will be held at various locations and are open to anyone over the age of 16. All acting abilities welcome, including no experience.



**i** [www.highweald.org/dramaworkshops](http://www.highweald.org/dramaworkshops)  
T: 01580 879951



## Rights of Way



A new online map for the **East Sussex Rights of Way** network has been published with the location of footpaths and bridleways as well as the stiles, gates and bridges along the way. It can be used to plan walks and rides and gives reference numbers to help users report issues to the Rights of Way team.

**i** [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway/rightsofwaymap/intro.htm](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway/rightsofwaymap/intro.htm)



Peter Greenhalf

# You can't leave the High Weald without...

## ...tasting local produce

Beef from Sussex cattle, succulent lamb and delicious dairy products. Fruit, pressed into juices or cider, wines from local vineyards, and beer from Westerham, WJ King, Weltons and Rother Valley breweries.

## ...taking a village walk

Marvel at the variety of building styles from humble cottages to grand houses. Note the traditional building materials that give the area its character such as brick, peg tiles, sandstone and timber.



Hole Park

## ...travelling along a sunken routeway

Leave the main roads behind and you are soon burrowing your way through in lanes deepened by centuries of wear. Look out for names that hint at past destinations: Furnace Lane, Mill Lane, Forest Road.

## ...exploring Ashdown Forest

The heathy heart of the High Weald, home to myriad wildlife. It has magnificent views and is the largest area of open countryside in the South East where you may wander at will.



## ...a woodland wander

More than 30 per cent of the area is woodland. Wood Anemone clothes the woodland floor in early spring followed by carpets of bluebells. Revel in their cool shade in the heat of summer and marvel at their autumn colours.

## ...wondering at sandrock

Dinosaurs roamed the area when the bedrock was created. The cliffs at Hastings expose the most complete succession of cretaceous rocks in Europe. Harrison's Rocks near Tunbridge Wells is the South East's most popular rock outcrop for climbing while small outcrops dot the area.

## ...visiting a historic garden

The landscape is the backdrop for many notable gardens, including Great Dixter, Sissinghurst, Nymans and Pashley Manor.



Bodiam Castle



Kent and East Sussex Railway

## ...a steam railway trip

Experience the intermittent hoots and steam of a bygone age of travel on one of the area's three railways: the Bluebell Railway, the Spa Valley Railway and the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

## ...visiting a castle

Soak up the atmosphere at some of the most evocative castles: the romantic ruins of Scotney; Bodiam, with its moat; Hever, the home of Anne Boleyn; and Herstmonceux, one of the country's first major brick buildings.



Great Dixter



Many of the activities featured in the Anvil have been supported by the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme. The Scheme is a £3.1 million heritage programme focused on the High Weald's highest ridge. The Scheme is restoring ancient habitats in the area's four medieval forests, improving public access and involving people in the area's unique heritage. The three-year Scheme, which is led by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, involves 18 partners.

[www.highweald.org/](http://www.highweald.org/)  
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